

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

NO. 2737

A SERMON

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"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

Acts 8:37

IT is not my wont to preach what people commonly call "baptizing sermons." It is very seldom that I even mention the subject of baptism in my preaching, for I find that many of my hearers learn the Scriptural teaching concerning it without much help from me. Of those who have come to unite with us in church fellowship, a very large proportion consists of persons who have searched out the truth upon this matter for themselves and could in no wise trace their alteration in sentiment to any remark of mine, but they had seen the ordinance clearly revealed in Holy Scripture. This is a method of arriving at the truth which I greatly prefer to any instruction imparted by myself, for in the case of people thus divinely taught, I know that their faith will "not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

I refused, on one occasion, to go to Ireland when invited to do so by a brother who gave, as the reason why he wished me to go, that by going there I should greatly increase the Baptist denomination. "No," I said, "I would not go across the street, much less across the sea, merely to make people Baptists." Wherever I may be, I endeavor, as in the sight of God, so to deal with men as to bring them to Christ, leaving the Spirit of God further to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto them.

Yet I dare not be altogether silent concerning believers' baptism. If I would make full proof of my ministry and preach the whole Gospel as it is contained in the New Testament, I must proclaim the truth with regard to that great ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He has Himself put in such an important position by coupling it with faith and salvation—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Still, let me assure you, dear friends, that I do not introduce this topic in any controversial spirit, for that I would abhor—but only because I feel it to be "the burden of the Lord" that presses upon me and as it is a part of God's Holy Word, I must preach thereon.

In the excellent and estimable Presbyterian church, before the administration of the Lord's supper, it is usual to have a sermon for the purpose of what is called "fencing the table." That fencing is a great part of the duty of the Christian minister in many other matters beside the communion. All Bible doctrines, all God's promises, and both Christ's ordinances need to be fenced. In the fencing of the Lord's table, the principal topic of the preacher is—Who are the fit subjects for the reception of the Lord's supper? Who may draw nigh and partake of the symbolic bread and wine, and who may not approach thereunto?

Now, as the communion table should be fenced, so also should the baptismal pool, so should the promises of God, and so should those great and glorious doctrines which are the essentials of our faith. And I believe that the only fence which is proper and Scriptural is that which is given in our text, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

If a man says to me, "May I reckon myself to be one of the elect?" I reply, "God certainly has an elect people, but you have no right to consider yourself as one of them unless you believe with all your heart." Then there is the doctrine of effectual calling—and if anyone asks me if he is effectually called, I

answer, “If you believe with all your heart, then you certainly have an interest in this glorious doctrine of God’s grace.”

Then, with regard to the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, which is the basis and foundation of all our hopes, I see no warrant for telling any man that he is redeemed until I can get him to give a full and satisfactory reply to this inquiry, “Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart?” It seems to me that the doctrines of the Gospel have no truly comforting message to any man until he believes upon Christ with all his heart.

So also is it with the promises of God. They are rich, dainty, spiritual fare which He has spread upon the table of His banqueting house, but no one who does not believe in Christ with all his heart has any right to lay hold on the “exceeding great and precious promises” which God has recorded for the comfort of His own people.

I know that there are some loving and gracious invitations which are addressed to the sinner, and I thank God that it is so, but I also know that the sinner can never realize the sweetness of them until he believes in Jesus. I am sure that he cannot comply with the invitation except by believing with all his heart—and that he must be a stranger to the gracious promises and encouraging invitations until he comes and puts his trust in “Jesus only.”

I am fully persuaded that it is the same with the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord’s table is not, on any pretense, to be approached by those who do not believe in Him with all their heart. “Away, ye profane!” should be the cry of the Christian minister when he is about to dispense the sacred emblems.

Believer in Christ, you are heartily welcome. You have a right to come to the table of your Lord if you believe in Him with all your heart. Whosoever and whatsoever you may be, the only barrier which we can rightly set before you bears upon it this inscription, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”

Nay, if you believe, there is no barrier, so come and welcome. We dare not set up before the table of our Lord any barrier which God Himself has not put there, so we invite to it all who have believed in Jesus—but we solemnly warn all those who come and partake of this ordinance without faith in Christ—that they are eating and drinking condemnation unto themselves, not discerning the Lord’s body, for none have the right to approach His table but those who, with a true heart, believe in Christ and in Him alone.

It is equally so with regard to the other ordinance of believers’ baptism. Whatever opinions different men may hold concerning it, the Word of God *must* stand and it is our duty to preach all that is there revealed to us. One point that is very plain is that no one has a right to this ordinance until he is a believer in Christ.

I am astonished that any Christians should ever have imagined that this rule could be relaxed in any case, and it has often puzzled me that all Calvinists do not see that baptism must belong to the people of God, and to them only. Do we not rightly teach that the doctrines of Scripture are for the comfort and instruction of the believer? That the promises of God are, as a rule, for the believer? That, in fact, the whole plan of God’s dispensation of grace is on behalf of the believer, and the believer only?

Then I cannot understand upon what ground any solitary exception should be made to the divine rule, and that it should be imagined that this solemn ordinance should be left open to all the world—not merely to all the intelligent inhabitants of the world, but also be left so open that even an unconscious infant might become the subject of it.

Not only is that a convincing argument with me, but as I understand it, the whole Gospel of Christ is addressed to intelligent individuals. I cannot see anything that I could do to any purpose if I were called upon to preach to an unconscious person. The Gospel appeals to men’s understanding and heart, but if their whole mental powers are in a dormant condition, I do not see what I, as a preacher, can do in such a case, or what bearing the Gospel itself has upon such people.

I am amazed that an unconscious babe should be made the partaker of an ordinance which, according to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, requires the conscious acquiescence and complete heart-trust of the recipient. Very few, if any, would argue that infants ought to receive the Lord's supper, but there is no more Scriptural warrant for bringing them to the one ordinance than there is for bringing them to the other.

The Church of England Catechism is quite right when it says that repentance and faith are required of persons to be baptized, but its practice is not in accordance with that Scriptural teaching. The godfather and godmother of the child, when they bring him to the font, promise in his name that he shall repent and believe, and that he shall renounce the devil and all his works—this is more than the child himself could promise to do, and more than I could promise to do. Or if I did say so, I should be a liar to God and to my own soul, since it would be utterly impossible for me to fulfill such a promise.

The theory of the Church is that this promise of repentance and faith is like the paper money that we have in circulation. It is true that it is not the current coin of repentance and faith, nevertheless it is valid—the promise that the child shall repent and believe is sufficient—which seems to me to be a strange figment for any rational creature to endorse.

I will put the case thus—suppose that there is a king who has absolute dominion over his subjects—and suppose that there is a certain work to be done, say, the insertion of glass in a window which has been broken. Further, imagine that there are two workmen, to both of whom the king gives the command, “Set to work and mend that window.” One of them says, “I will not.” The other says, “I will,” yet straightway hangs cobwebs over the broken places.

It appears to me that there is not much difference in the disobedience in the two cases. And it is very much the same with those who positively refuse to obey what they know to be the plain commands of God's Word concerning baptism and those who practically disobey those commands by substituting the sprinkling of babies for the immersion of believers, and then bringing in the fiction of sponsorship to support their alteration of the divine ordinance.

To my mind, it is a vain attempt to evade compliance with a plain and simple command and is therefore worse than avowed disobedience would have been. I can understand the position of a man who does not, in his own conscience, feel that this is an ordinance which is limited to the believer, but I cannot comprehend the consistency of one who says that repentance and faith are necessary before baptism, and who then takes the unconscious infant into his arms, sprinkles a few drops of water upon his brow, and then declares that he has become a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven! That seems to me to be not only the height of absurdity, but to be also a heinous sin in the sight of the Most High God.

I repeat what I have already said, that the fencing of both Christ's ordinances can be accomplished by the condition laid down in our text, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” I cannot thrust my brethren and sisters from the Lord's table if they believe in Him with all their heart, nor can I keep back from baptism any child who believes in Jesus with all his heart.

But on the other hand, though he be grey-headed and venerable—if he is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not my business, as a servant of the Lord, to alter my King's laws so as to please him, but rather, to say to him, “Stand back until you are in a fit state to obey my Master's commands. You are not yet entitled to share the privileges that belong to God's family. Until you have believed in Jesus and are thus proved to be one of His children, I cannot admit you as a partaker of either of the ordinances which He has ordained.”

Now I am going to practically carry out the teaching of the text by briefly and affectionately addressing our dear friends who are about to be baptized. The observance of this ordinance will awaken, in many of our minds, recollections of similar services in the past. It brings to my remembrance a river in Cambridgeshire, with a great assembly of spectators on the banks, and a youth walking into the midst of the flowing stream and there giving himself up, spirit, soul, and body, to the service of his Master.

It recalls to me the hour when I thus publicly avowed my allegiance to the King of kings and I can join with John Newton in saying to my dear Lord and Master,—

*“Many days have pass’d since then,
Many changes I have seen;
Yet have been upheld till now;
Who could hold me up but Thou?”*

Perhaps others, who have thus “put on Christ,” may be cheered, and refreshed, and stirred up by the address I shall now give to those who will presently enter the baptismal pool.

I. In explaining the text, we will take it almost word by word, and first, dear friends, note THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL FAITH—“If *thou* believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” be baptized.

Have you believed in Christ for yourselves? It is useless for you to say that you are the sons of pious parents, the daughters of godly fathers and mothers. Unless you yourselves believe in Jesus, you will be cast down to hell just as surely as will the ungodly descendants of wicked men and women. The faith of your parents may be blessed by God as the means by which you will be brought to Christ, but if you are not brought to Him, all the faith of others cannot avail for your salvation. Though you should have Abraham to be your father, and Sarah to be your mother, even then you could not be saved without your own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

How apt are we, who occupy the family pew in the house of God, and who from our infancy have been brought up to hear the Word preached, to imagine that there is a kind of family holiness which may avail for us all, and to conceive that because our parents were Christians, we also are saved! Yet it is not so—there is no such thing as a Christian family, sufficient to include you at the last great day, unless you who belong to it are yourselves Christians. And there is no such thing as a Christian nation unless the individuals who compose that nation are all Christians.

Men are ever prone to talk of religion in the mass, but beloved, remember that you will have to enter heaven one by one if you go there at all. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” No eyes except your own will avail you in looking to the cross or in weeping over your sin. No other heart’s repentance can take the place of your own heart’s godly sorrow for sin. No lips but your own can breathe the penitential prayer on your behalf, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

You must be brought to feel your own need of a Savior, you must yourselves be enabled by the Holy Spirit to put your trust in Jesus, or else you will as surely be lost as if you had been born in a Hottentot hut, of parents who neither knew nor loved the Lord.

personal religion is an essential prerequisite to admission into the church of Christ or to either of the ordinances which He has instituted. I shudder when I see men, who are not Christians, taking to themselves the promises that are addressed to believers. I have heard a man say of a sermon, which was meant for the comfort of the children of God, “Oh, how sweet it was to me!” Whereas he was eating stolen sweets to which he had no manner of right.

“If thou believest with all thine heart,” you may suck the honey out of the promises. If thou believe, you may walk to and fro in the spiritual Canaan, from Dan to Beersheba, for it is all your own. From the hilltops to the valleys’ utmost depths, all is yours. Yea, from the very center of heaven to its circumference, or to its furthest limits, all is your own possession.

But if you believe not, your pedigree avails you nothing. Your godly parentage shall not advantage you in the last great day—nay, nor even now, for the wrath of God abides on you because you have not believed on His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He has sent into the world as the one and only Savior of sinners.

Put your hands to your hearts, then, my dear brothers and sisters, and search and see whether you do really believe for yourselves personally. Suppose the Ethiopian eunuch had said, “I do not myself

believe in Jesus, but my father and mother did”? Philip would have replied, “Their faith cannot avail for you. Only ‘if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest’ be baptized.”

Religion is a personal matter, the ordinances of Christ must be observed by believers only according to their individual standing in Him. It is of no use for you to talk of your parents being in the covenant of grace—are *you* in the covenant? Can you say, with David, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure”? “Do you believe on the Son of God?” For if you do not, then we cannot admit you to fellowship with His people, and we cannot permit you to be baptized in His name.

II. Note, next, THE GREAT PREREQUISITE FOR BAPTISM. “If thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest” be baptized.

So the question each one of you have to answer is this—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? “Well,” says one, “I try to serve the Master as best I can.” I am glad to hear it, and if your service is the result of faith in Christ, I bless God for it—but if it is not based on faith and is not the fruit of faith—it is worthless. All the service of unbelieving men is but whitewashed sin. It may look like virtue, but it is only a base counterfeit, not the genuine coin. Again I put the question to you—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

“Well,” says another, “I accept all the doctrines of grace, beginning with predestination and ending with final perseverance. I am as orthodox a believer as ever lived.” That is not all I want to know from you. Faith in Christ is not the reception of a dry, dead orthodoxy—to believe in Jesus is not simply to be a sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Calvinist. Saving faith is not the mere reception of a creed or form of any kind.

To believe is to trust and no man truly believes—in the New Testament meaning of the word—until he is brought to trust in Christ alone, and takes his whole religion upon trust, relying not on what he sees, nor on what he is, but on what is revealed in God’s Word—not on what he is, or can be, or shall be, nor on what he does or can do, nor on what he feels or does not feel—but relying solely on what Christ has done, is doing, and shall yet do.

Now, dear brethren and sisters, do you thus believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your hearts? Although you have upon you the attire of candidates for baptism, I entreat you to retire from this pool if you do not believe in Christ. I think I see a tear in your eyes and I hear you say, “Blessed be God that, with many imperfections, I can still look up to Christ, and say,—

*“Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress:
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”*

Well, dear friend, if you can truly make that declaration, however feeble your faith may be, this ordinance is for you, the communion table is for you, the doctrines of the Gospel are yours, the promises of Christ are yours, yea, Christ Himself is yours. And Christ is all, therefore “all things are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

In your baptism, it should be your aim to please God—“but without faith it is impossible to please him.” How can that which is not pleasing to Him be accounted as the observance of one of His ordinances? But “if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” observe it and your observance will be acceptable in His sight. If Christ is the unsupported pillar of your hope, the solitary stay and prop of your trust, if your faith really and truly says, “Nothing save Jesus do I rely on for salvation,” come hither, come and welcome. “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?”

Some years ago, a man came to me and said that he wished to be baptized. I put this question to him, “Why do you wish that?” He answered, “Because I want to be a Christian.” “But” I inquired, “do you

think that baptism will make you a Christian?" "Yes," he said. "Then," I replied, "you are grossly mistaken. We baptize none but those who profess to be already saved through faith in Jesus. Baptism can have no possible effect in helping you on the road to heaven."

The man seemed to be utterly staggered at that idea, for he had somehow got into his head the notion that there was something efficacious in the ordinance itself. And when I tried to explain to him that the Scriptures contain no warrant for such a thought as that and therefore we would not baptize any who did not believe themselves to be already saved, the man went away staggered.

Yet I hope that he also went away resolved to ask himself such solemn questions as these, "How is it that I am not a Christian? How is it that I am not a follower of Christ, and that the minister therefore refuses to baptize me, urging me first to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and after that to attend to baptism, but not before?"

God forbid that any of you, dear friends, should for a single moment think that there is any saving virtue in the water in that baptistery! If you were baptized in the River Jordan itself, what could that avail you? Though the waters of baptism flowed down from the Garden of Eden, they could not wash away the stain of sin. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can do that. He that has been plunged in that—

*"Fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"*

may also be plunged into the baptismal pool.

When anyone believes, let him be baptized. But if you believe not, stand back. This is a sacred circle into which no unbeliever can be permitted to enter. "If thou believest," come hither and confess your faith as your Lord ordained. But if you believe not, take heed lest you destroy your own soul by meddling with that ordinance which is not for you in your present condition.

III. Now, thirdly, note THE KIND OF FAITH THAT IS HERE MENTIONED. "If thou believest *with all thine heart.*"

There is a great deal of difference between faith *and* faith. One kind is the faith of the head and another is the faith of the heart. Some men have all their religion in their head—like poor, miserable, poverty-stricken students, they confine their religion to their head, and there they let it feed upon some dry thought or empty speculation. But the faith of the true Christian occupies the best parlor of the heart. It has its citadel in the innermost part of his being. It dwells at home in his inmost soul.

The devil himself has the faith of the head. He believes and trembles. He is as orthodox as many very learned divines. As far as the mere statement of theology is concerned, I could trust the devil to draw up a creed. I believe he is thoroughly sound and that he knows a great deal more about God's Word than most of us do.

He can quote it correctly when he pleases, although he is also adept at misquoting it for his own ends. I do not think that the devil ever was an Arminian, or that he ever will be one—he understands the doctrines of grace, at least in his head, too well for that. In one respect, he is better than some Antinomians, for they believe and presume, while he believes and trembles. Still, Satan and Antinomians never would be very great enemies. I wonder that they talk about the devil tempting them—I believe that they tempt themselves or that they tempt the devil to tempt them if he really does tempt them at all.

Yet the devil hates much that he believes with his head. There is, for instance, the doctrine of election. "Ah!" says he, "I am not able to deny the truth of that doctrine, yet I hate it, for I know that I am not one of the elect." It is the same with redemption. The devil says, "I loathe that doctrine. I know that Christ has redeemed His people with His blood, but I am not one of them. The cross of Christ is glorious, and I am obliged to admit its power, for I have felt it often, and I am yet to feel it more and more, but I hate the cross, for it crushes me, and takes multitudes of my subjects away from me. I know that Jesus is the Son of God—I wish He was not and if I could I would tear Him from His throne and

cast Him out of His dominions.” So, you see, the devil believes with his head much that he hates with his heart.

Faith in Christ is never true unless it is the faith of the heart, unless the heart as well as the head gives assent to it, unless the truth is not only believed, but is also loved. Do you, dear friends, thus believe the truth with your hearts? Are you not only convinced of it, but is it your joy and delight? Do you know that you are a sinner, and do you mourn over that sad fact? Do you know this truth experientially?

Do you also know Christ as your Savior? Have you received Him into your inmost heart as a possession of vital importance to you? Do you appreciate His presence and rejoice to have Him ever with you? Do you know that the blood of Jesus blots out sin? Have you learned that truth, not merely as a Scriptural doctrine, but as a matter of heartfelt experience inasmuch as *your* sins have been thus blotted out? Do you believe, in your heart, that the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier? Do you heartily believe that truth and therefore do you pray, “Lord, renew and sanctify me by Your gracious Spirit in the inner man”?

If not, whatever faith you may think you have does not entitle you to baptism, much less to heaven. Therefore, stand back. If your head alone is full of that which is sound, and right, and true—and your heart is empty of faith in Christ, and love to God, and to His truth—stand back from that baptistery, for you must not intrude into the place which is reserved for the followers of Christ.

Philip said to the eunuch, “If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest be baptized.” I am afraid that some who have been baptized in that pool have not believed with all their heart. They said they did, but I question whether it was true concerning all of them. And beloved, if we honestly test ourselves, some of us will have grave cause to inquire whether we have any right to the ordinance of believers’ baptism.

Do you, friend, believe on Christ with all your heart? Christ will have the whole of your heart or none at all. He will never be content to have part and to leave the devil to occupy the rest. True believers will give all their heart to Christ, even though they cannot yet get possession of all of it for Him. The fact is, it is very much the same with the believer’s heart as it was with the Israelites in Canaan—the whole land belonged to them, yet they could not get possession of it all for a while—they had to fight with the Canaanites and to drive them out.

Now, candidates for baptism, can you say from your heart that you give up all to Christ? Can each one of you say to your Lord,—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee”?*

Can you give up all—life, body, soul, health, wealth, or talent—can you give up all to Christ? If you cannot, you have not believed on Him with all your heart—there is some part that you have kept back. If you believe *with all your heart*, your surrender will be *of all your heart*. “Oh!” says one, “I desire to give all to Christ.” Then, my brother, you have given all to Him—you have really done so in effect, and it will be your privilege practically to carry out your wish by daily making a full surrender of yourself to Him.

Mark just one other aspect of the text. Have you any other confidence besides that which you have in Christ? Is there even a little self-reliance in your heart with regard to salvation, or a little reliance on your own good works or on any ceremonies that you can observe? Then I must say to you, “Stand back from this baptistery until you believe in Christ with all your heart, and can say to Him,—

*“All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring.”*

If you can truthfully say that, come and welcome. If not, stand back.

Here I can find comfort for myself, for whatever I cannot say, I can truly say that I believe in Jesus with all my heart. I have nothing else to trust to. Others may rely upon their good works, but I have none to which I can trust. Some may rely upon their prayers, but I have to weep because mine are so few and so feeble. Some may rest on ceremonies, but I have often proved the futility of even the best of them.

At the Lord's table itself, I dare not trust to any blessing received through the emblems of my Savior's broken body and shed blood—my reliance must be upon Him alone. My own strength is perfect weakness. I cannot trust to it or to anything but Christ. Can you not say the same, dear brothers and sisters? Then may you go down into the water without fear. But if you believe not with all your heart, stand back from this baptistery.

In closing my discourse, I would very affectionately put this question to all my hearers, leaving it to the Holy Spirit to apply it to your heart—Does it not seem, from this passage, that faith is necessary before baptism and that, if this eunuch had not believed in Jesus, Philip would not have baptized him? “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”

If any of you are unbelievers, venture not to think that in your present state you can be baptized in the Scriptural fashion. But if you are believers, and have not been baptized, let me put it to your consciences whether you think you are right in neglecting this ordinance of Christ? That is a matter for you seriously to think of—it rests between your Savior and your own soul.

I pray the Lord to guide us all to a right decision. If we are wrong, may He set us right, and if you are wrong, may He set you right. The prayer of a certain scholar was very wise one and I commend it to you.

In a great dispute in which he was engaged, he was observed to be frequently writing, so someone said to him, “May I look at your notes?” “Certainly,” he replied. When the notes were examined, it was found that they simply consisted of the words, “More light, Lord, more light!” I think that is a request which we may present for many of our brethren, and certainly for ourselves, “More light, Lord, more light!”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ACTS 8:4-40

Verses 4-6. *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

We cannot tell how far the soil had been prepared for the sowing of the Gospel seed by our Lord's visit to Sychar, a city of Samaria. The influence of the converts in that place may have inclined the people of the city of Samaria to give more heed to the preaching of Philip. The work of a great and good man may sometimes seem to die out, but its effects remain and may extend beyond the place where he labored.

7-11. *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.*

He had managed to secure great influence over the people, and he held them under his wicked rule.

12-17. *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which*

were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

So that miraculous gifts were bestowed upon them. Of course, there was already manifest among them that divine operation of the Spirit of God, by which men are converted and brought to faith in Christ—but they had not known the special, attesting, wonder-working power of the Spirit until the apostles came amongst them. A good work was thus done, yet everything was not altogether as the apostles could have wished it to be.

18-26. *And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

He must have wondered at receiving such an order as that. To be directed to go to a city, he could understand, but to be sent to a road which went through the desert, must have seemed strange to him. Yet he obeyed his Lord's orders.

27. *And he arose and went:*

Always do as you are told by your Lord. The first qualification for a good servant of Jesus Christ is immediate obedience.

27-28. *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

He was a devout man who was seeking rest of heart, but he could not find it. He had joined in all the solemn services of the Jewish faith, but as yet he had not discovered the great secret of eternal life. He was still searching for it, and as he rode along the rough road, he was reading the Book of the prophet Esaias.

29-30. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

That is the main thing. A religion that is not based upon understanding will soon come to an end. An emotional religion—one that is nothing but emotion—will be temporary and transient religion. So Philip inquired of the eunuch, “Understandest thou what thou readest?”

31-34. *And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?*

That was a very important question—it went to the very root of the matter. It was useless for him to read about some unknown person—he must know who it was of whom the prophet had written

35. *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

You may begin anywhere in the Bible and preach Jesus. You may begin at the first chapter of Genesis, or at the last chapter of Malachi, at the first of Matthew or the last of Revelation, and still preach Jesus, for He is the sum and substance of the whole Scripture.

36-40. *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached—*

See how he kept to his one business wherever he might be—in Samaria, on the desert pathway, or in the town of Azotus, “He preached”—

40. *In all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.*

Oh, for the like earnest spirit to be in all of us who profess to be Christ’s followers, that we may preach Him wherever we may be!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.